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ABSTRACT

This interviewing guide, one of a series, is designed to acquaint employment counselors and interviewers with the nature of mental retardation and to assist in understanding the implications for employment. It is intended as a supplement to existing employment service materials, to aid the counselor or interviewer in recognizing the potential of the mentally retarded and the great variety of occupations in which they may be suitably placed. After a brief introduction, the following areas are covered: (1) The Nature of Mental Retardation, (2) Significant Factors in Counseling and Placement of the Mentally Retarded (such as the condition of retardation, training, work experience, use of tests and measures, general educational development, and working conditions in potential job sites), (3) Placement Process, and (4) Cooperating Agencies.
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interviewing guides *for specific disabilities*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
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MENTAL RETARDATION—I. Introduction

This interviewing guide, one of a series, was prepared by the United States Employment Service. It is designed to acquaint employment counselors and interviewers with the nature of mental retardation and to assist in understanding the implications for employment. The guide will be useful in assessing the applicant's physical and mental capacities in relation to suitable fields of work, for training, or specific jobs.

This guide is not intended as an all-inclusive instruction on counseling or placement techniques or as a guide for employers. Rather, it is intended as a supplement to existing ES materials, to aid the counselor or interviewer in recognizing the potential of the mentally retarded and the great variety of occupations in which they may be suitably placed. It emphasizes that all vocationally significant factors regarding the applicant should be considered in assisting a retarded person to make a vocational choice or in referring that person for employment.

II. The Nature of Mental Retardation

The Employment Service does not determine classification of applicants as mentally retarded. If presented from medical records, schools, psychiatrists or psychologists, rehabilitation agencies, or sheltered workshops as part of the information about the applicant, ES accepts such classification. The job placement worker, however, is primarily interested in a person's functional ability as opposed to classification in terms of an IQ score or measured "G" level. One study demonstrates that 85% of the persons classified as mentally retarded are capable of achieving social and economic independence. Because special counseling techniques may apply where persons have been classified as mentally retarded, it is important for the placement worker to know what that classification implies.

The most widely accepted definition of mental retardation is that provided by the American Association on Mental Deficiency, which states: "Mental Retardation refers to significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period." No one should be considered retarded unless both factors are present. The presence of adaptive or maladaptive behavior is the controlling factor in determining the presence of retardation.

¹Measure of general learning ability from the GATB.

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MENTAL RETARDATION
Revised 1974

Retardation

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While a person should not be classified as retarded solely on the basis of IQ, the ES counselor will find that the IQ has traditionally been used in schools and it will frequently be reflected and sometimes emphasized in referrals to the ES. In general, State rehabilitation agencies cannot consider an applicant eligible for services as mentally retarded if his IQ exceeds 70. Some State or city school systems consider 75 as the dividing line. The usual classification is: 75-90, slow learner; 50-75, educable; and 25-50, trainable—usually in terms of caring for one's own physical needs. The employment counselor should keep in mind that there is no sharp division between groups. Rather, there is a continuous transition from one level to another which may be substantially modified by significant differences in aptitudes, interests, and personality patterns.

The IQ or "G" does not reveal social adjustment. Character and personality, training and habits, degree of social adjustment, and motivation make a great deal of difference in how each individual reacts in an employment situation. As many differences of personality organization or interest may exist among mentally retarded persons as among persons of average intelligence.

The mentally retarded individual, just as the normal individual, has a unique work personality. The retarded person has a distinct pattern of interest and a range of abilities that is not necessarily similar to that of other retarded persons. Most retarded applicants are qualified for a number of occupations and can be successful in many fields of work.

III. Significant Factors in Counseling and Placement of the Mentally Retarded

With many applicants the counselor must make allowances for the influence of a culturally deprived environment on apparent intellectual development, particularly verbal ability.

Also, physical conditions and handicaps are sometimes mistaken for mental retardation. An individual may be a slow learner, but given the opportunity to adjust on whatever level of ability he has, may work well after learning the job or under suitable supervision. ES staff should always remember that social, motivational, family, environmental, and personality factors as well as skills acquired, alter the significance of IQ or "G" scores and determine success. Therefore, the greatest of care is needed to assess fully the strengths and potential of the retarded applicant, and to apply selective placement methods in all job referrals to assure selection of an appropriate employer as well as an appropriate job. Some significant factors to be considered in counseling and placement of the retarded are described below.

A. The Condition of Retardation.

Obtain from the referring agency all available records evidencing the condition of retardation. Be especially alert for indications of mental level and related psychological factors, special aptitudes, level of social adjustment, and—if known and reported—the cause of retardation. A medical history should also be obtained using the ES medical record form ES 571 B and C.

Record results of any psychological or aptitude tests interpretations from referring agencies and case workers' or teachers' suggestions as to the person's social adjustment and environmental factors which have vocational significance.

1. Physical Disabilities.—The same factors which cause mental retardation, such as a birth injury, may also cause physical disabilities. Examples include spasticity, impaired hearing or vision, other generalized or localized motor and sensory handicaps, facial or body impairments.

When physical disabilities are present they should be described. Note any medical or family suggestions for treatment of the disability or limitation of work activity suggested by the referring agent.

Make note of any medication which is prescribed on a continuing basis. Necessary drugs can sometimes have a bearing on the types of jobs for which placement should be considered. If there is any question, ask the referring agent to provide additional information.

2. Social and Emotional Conditions.—Negative attitudes, anxieties, neuroses may inhibit full use of the applicant's capacities. If any such condition is known and reported by the referring agency or diagnostic workshop, make special note of the condition.

The mentally retarded have a different and more difficult problem in social adjustment than normal persons. The very existence of an intellectual limitation, especially if it is recognized

by the applicant, may cause emotional insecurity. The failure of many retarded workers on the job often is due not to their intellectual deficiency or inadequate skills, but to emotional factors. They may need a great deal of reassurance. A good "self image" is especially helpful when reinforced in a work situation by friendly supervisors and coworkers.

The counselor should exercise care when attempting to evaluate an applicant's emotional reaction. Mental illness and temporary emotional blocking can be mistaken for mental retardation. If the presence of mental illness or emotional disturbance is suspected, the counselor should discuss it with the medical informant or the referral source.

In attempting to project performance success, when interviewing a retarded person, it should be kept in mind that in comparison to a "normal" applicant, the retarded person will be unsophisticated and relatively naive. The client cannot always articulate appropriate responses.

3. Referring Agency's Prognosis.—Look for information which suggests whether or not the applicant's mental condition can be expected to improve. Has the full potential been reached?

Indicate the possibility, even if remote, of improvement in achievement level. Especially where retardation is non-organic, e.g., the result of cultural deprivation, poor nutrition, the possibility of raising the applicant's achievement level by skill training is a matter to be explored.

B. Training

The kind of training the applicant has received is exceedingly important in terms of preparation for the work situation. Describe the exact type of training which has been provided and give the dates of such training. Note any retest after training or experience and/or recommendation provided by the instructors.

Most retarded persons do not learn easily by themselves. They must be taught in special ways if they are to function at their maximum. Studies show that achievement levels do rise with training.

Estimate what improvements may be expected from education, training, etc., and indicate skills for which training is desirable and feasible.

1. Job-relatedness.—To be of greatest value, training should include not only skills involved in specific job tasks, but also should include instructions on the use of timeclocks, the meaning of payroll deductions and similar workworld conditions to which the retarded may not have been oriented.

2. Independent living skills.—Retarded persons are sometimes referred to ES from a sheltered or semisheltered environment. As a result, they will sometimes have mastered the mechanics of a job but be deficient in the skills required for independent living.

Can the retarded job applicant care for personal needs and get about alone? Does he understand money values? Can he use money correctly? Can the applicant understand and use public transportation, or is some friend or relative available to provide transportation to and from a job? Can the person use the telephone? Depending upon the answers to these questions, it may sometimes be necessary to refer the applicant for special training in independent living skills and in mobility prior to or concurrently with job placement.

C. Work Experience

Thoroughly appraise the mental and physical demands, the working conditions and the emotional strain involved in any job experiences which the applicant has had. In the absence of prior gainful work experiences, seek information about informal experience which may give clues as to the skill potential of the applicant.

The physical demands analysis and the physical capacities approach may also be helpful.

1. Competitive Employment.—Note reactions to the particular conditions under which the applicant has worked, the types of tasks at which performance was best and the types in which performance was less than desired. Use this information in combination with aptitude tests, but give it its due weight of importance. For example, a girl with a "G" score of 59 has successfully held a job as a nurse's aid in a hospital after suitable training for that work. Some persons who have been classified as mentally retarded are performing well in sales and clerical positions. Many have been employed in industry. Certain hotels and restaurants have exceedingly effective programs for employing retarded persons, and have found the programs highly cost-effective since the special training is more than offset by the low cost of turnover.

2. Workshop Employment.—Has the applicant been employed in a rehabilitation facility with a controlled work environment where handicapped persons are helped toward normal living and productive vocational status? If so, performance and related training records provide fruitful sources of information about strengths of the applicant. Examples of types of work which are carried out in sheltered workshops are: operating a drill press, sorting hardware, packaging and labeling, wiring electrical harnesses, stapling cartons.

3. Informal Experiences.—Daily experiences around the home or in school may give some clues as to what the applicant can or likes to do. Consider the interests and leisure time activities of the retarded and how they relate to job possibilities. It is not impossible that some retarded persons

D. The Use of Tests and Measures

It is important for the ES counselors to refer mentally retarded applicants for the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) or the Nonreading Aptitude Test Battery (NATB), even though other test information has been forwarded by the referring agency. The GATB and the NATB are especially geared to the occupational world. Special research information gives added insight to placement strategy through use of these particular tests and measurements.

In interpreting GATB and NATB test measurement it should be kept in mind of course that the test is so constructed that a score of 100 represents the average level of the normal working population.

have pursued hobbies where skills were developed. Include discussion of these areas in your interview.

A low score on one or more of the "cognitive" aptitudes (G-General Learning Ability, V-Verbal Aptitude, N-Numerical Aptitude) does not mean that placement is contraindicated on the basis of the person's aptitude scores, as there are many occupations in which competence is unrelated to scores on these aptitudes. For instance, over one third (22) of the 62 Occupational Aptitude Patterns (OAP) do not contain G, V, or N (601 occupations); over half (34) do not contain Aptitude G (789 occupations).

When referring applicants for tests, stress should be placed on the fact that they may have hidden abilities—abilities of which they themselves may be unaware. The importance of looking at the total profile is demonstrated by the research which shows that many people with a "G" score under 75 have average or above average scores in other abilities.

For example, one study showed 54% of the persons with a "G" under 75 had motor coordination over 100; 44% had manual dexterity over 100; 33% had scores on finger dexterity over 100; 27% had scores in form perception over 100; 18% had scores over 100 on clerical perception; and 5% scored over 100 in spatial ability. All of the above had measured below normal in academic ability.

In a separate sample, one-fourth of those persons with "G" scores of under 75 showed ability over 110 in one or more aptitudes. About three-fourths of the groups had a score of 90 or above in one

or more aptitudes. One individual had a "G" of 80 and manual ability of 140.

It is important to inspect the aptitude profile, particularly when the applicant's scores qualify for few or no OAP's. This will indicate where the applicant's strengths and weaknesses are and will provide clues for possible vocational exploration.

E. General Educational Development

Indicate the degree of development in each of the GED components, either by observation and estimate, or by use of the Basic Occupational Literacy Test (BOLT) which measures the language (L) and mathematic (M) components of the GED.

The General Educational Development (GED)² includes Reasoning Development, Mathematical Development and Language Development. The counselor can determine the GED requirements of any specific occupation by referring to the GED demands of the job as outlined in the supplements to the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)*. Use of the newly developed Basic Occupational Literacy Test (BOLT) which measures language (L) and mathematic (M) components of the GED will enable consideration for literally thousands of occupations listed in the DOT for which the GED levels have been estimated. Judgment must be used by the counselor in determining the Reasoning (R) component level possessed by the applicant, as well as all other characteristics, before considering the suitability of a specific occupation. The counselor should also be alert to the possibility that exceptional supervision, or in some cases modification of job duties can offset the apparent need for a relatively high R component of the GED.

²See *Relating General Educational Development to Career Planning Uses*. Manpower Administration, Washington, D.C. 20213.

F. Working Conditions in Jobs to Which You Might Refer a Mentally Retarded Person

Having fully assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the applicant, look for jobs where working conditions are within the person's tolerance levels from both a physical and mental point of view.

Evaluate working conditions in view of the person's level of intelligence and individual personality, and whether or not he can function adequately in a job situation involving one or more of the following conditions: (a) different duties with occasional changes; (b) unvaried, recurring operations; (c) close supervision with definite instructions and followup; (d) contacts with people; (e) working by himself away from others; (f) working under pressure to meet production standards; (g) making accurate measurements according to set specifications.

Placement in jobs where sudden emergencies requiring quick and accurate judgments might result in injury to themselves or others should generally be avoided.

One of the most significant factors making for job success is the kind of supervision the mentally retarded person or slow learner receives.

The importance of supervision must be explained to the prospective employer so that supervision will be clear and thorough and assure establishing correct work habits from the beginning. The employer should appreciate that patience may be needed in repeating instructions and following up to assure that they are understood and followed.

Employers should be made aware of the workers' need for reassurance and praise, and encouraged to reward retarded workers with approval for good performance.

Suggest to employers the importance of helping mentally retarded workers develop positive work habits.

If the job involves hazards such as operation of a woodworking machine, the worker must be drilled thoroughly in necessary safety measures. The nature of supervision available in the employer's establishment may determine if a specific job, as for example, operating a wood planer, is safe for a person of limited experience and judgment.

IV. Placement Process

While all the above has been written from the point of view of ultimate suitable placement of the mentally retarded job applicant, a special word is needed on the job development, referral interview, and followup. Experience indicates that for the retarded, as for other special applicant groups, it is important for the person who registers and counsels the applicant to follow through with job development, referral, and placement followup. Such efforts should be supplemented by the special job development and placement skills of local office placement interviewers.

A. Job Development

The ES counselor should visit personally any employer with whom retarded workers have not previously been placed successfully. The purpose of the visit is to observe and evaluate the job and the employer's ability and willingness to give supportive supervision.

If no suitable job is available in the local office current job order file or Job Bank, the ES staff member who knows the applicant should attempt to locate both a suitable job and a suitable employer.

When contacting the employer, stress should be placed on the ability of the applicant to do the job under consideration without overselling his potential. Favorable test results, training or other positive factors should be brought out. The employer should be told of the individual's limitations but emphasizing his ability. When there is any doubt as to the requirements of the job, the applicant qualifications should be discussed so there is mutual understanding as to whether the retarded person is fully qualified or if some modification of the work can be made.

Employers should be told of the need for proper orientation and supervision.

B. Referral Interview

The job under consideration should be fully described to the applicant so that he understands what is expected and can indicate his interest or reservations. These should be explored so that he is reassured if this is necessary or he can wait for a more suitable opening if this is indicated. He can be helped to fill out an application if this is required and should be given specific instructions as to how to reach and approach the employer.

C. Followup

The dimensions of retardation may not come to light until the individual is placed in the employment situation where the difficulties in competing with other employees are revealed. Adjustment on the job can often be made if the ES person who made the contact visits the place of employment soon after the retarded person starts work. Both the employer and applicant may benefit from this type of extended service. The ES counselor should continue working with the employer and applicant until total job adjustment is achieved.

V. Cooperating Agencies

The State Rehabilitation agency is responsible for workers in need of rehabilitation counseling, physical restoration, vocational training, tools, equipment, or other rehabilitation services. Use sheltered workshops and rehabilitation centers for work tryout, training, or development of full-time work capacity when applicant is not ready to enter full-time normal competitive work.

The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C. 20201, provides assistance through the following agencies:

1. Office of Education, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped provides research and consultative services to school systems throughout the country in the interest of all handicapped children, including the mentally retarded.
2. Rehabilitation Services Administration provides national leadership and technical guidance for the State-Federal rehabilitation program.

The following national organizations may be contacted for information about mental retardation:

National Association for Retarded Citizens
2709 Avenue F East
Arlington, Tex. 76011

American Association on Mental Deficiency
5201 Connecticut Avenue, NW.
Washington, D.C. 20015

Other local agencies (to be listed).



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